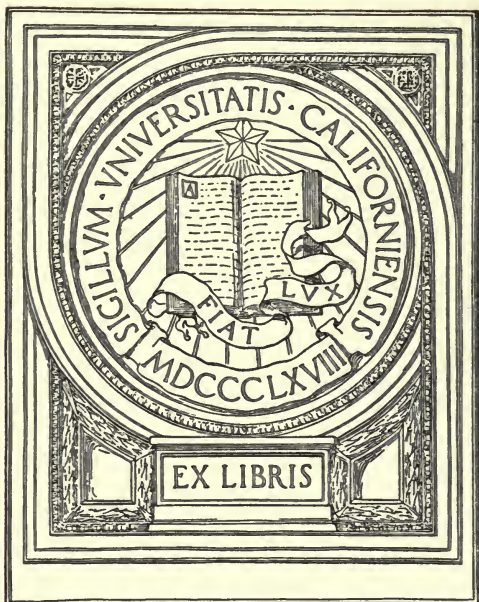


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THE
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A STAGE

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BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

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TO THE
MANAGER OF THE
THEATRE

NOTE. — For the right of representation, MANAGERS OF THEATRES can
address the Publishers.

CHARACTERS.

PA DUCKLOW, a well-to-do Farmer.
REUBEN, his adopted Son, a returned Soldier.
TADDY, another adopted Son, Boy of twelve or thirteen.
FERRING, }
JEPWORTH, } Neighbors.
PARSON GRANTLEY, an old Minister.
DICK, friend of Taddy, Boy of thirteen.
MA DUCKLOW, Farmer's Wife.
MISS BOSWICK, elderly Maiden Lady.
SOPHRONIA, Reuben's Wife.

COSTUMES.

Ducklow. ACT I., blue coat with brass buttons, dark pants, black silk vest, standing collar, checked gingham necktie, with gray parti-bald wig, "stovepipe" hat, overcoat. For the remainder of the piece, change to working dress, slouch hat and smock frock.

Reuben. Dark pants, slippers, white shirt with wide collar, uniform coat of a private, open; arm in sling.

Teddy. Boy's suit, pants buttoned on to jacket, white collar, battered and torn hat.

Dick. Jacket and overalls, slouch hat.

Parson. Black suit, white neckerchief, and standing collar.

Ferring. }
Jepworth. } Rough farmer's suits.

Mrs. Ducklow. Cheap calico dress, white collar, gray hair, cap, cloak, and bonnet.

Miss Beswick. Ditto, without the cap.

Sophronia. Brown dress, with neat white collar and cuffs.

COUPON BONDS.

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

ACT I.

SCENE. — THE DUCKLOW KITCHEN.

In flat (back side of the room), door, C., practicable ; window, with adjustable shade or curtain, R. C. ; row of pegs, with old coat, slippers, bootjack, &c., L. C. Chamber door, practicable, L. side. Bedroom door, practicable, R., with rattan on hooks beside it, towards stage ; R. corner, in the rear, sink near the window, with shelf for mug, cups, tin pail, &c. Stove between it and bedroom door. L. corner, clock ; L. corner and side, vacant chairs. Supper-table with one plate, &c., set C. As curtain rises, MRS. DUCKLOW is discovered sewing, R. corner of table, by light of kerosene lamp. TADDY standing near stove. There is an outcry from TADDY, who goes jumping about the room.

MRS. DUCKLOW. Why, Taddy ! what's the matter ?

TADDY (*sucking the back of his hand*). Blast her pictur' !

MRS. D. Blast whose pictur' ?

TAD. That cat's ! Didn't she give me an awful scratch though !

MRS. D. What was you a-doin' to the cat ?

TAD. Nothin' much ! (*Sucks back of his hand.*)

MRS. D. Answer me this minute, or I'll — (*Reaches for rattan.*)

TAD. Oh ! I'll tell ! I'll tell ! I was only jest tryin' to see if the cat's tail would go into the nose of the tea-kittle.

MRS. D. Cat's tail into the nose of the tea-kittle! I'll cat's tail ye, if I hear of any more such nonsense. Go to bed!

TAD. Oh, dear! can't I set up till Pa Ducklow comes home? He'll want me to hold the lantern for him to take care of the hoss.

MRS. D. Go to bed, I tell you! I want to mend your pants.

TAD. You're always wantin' to mend my pants! I wish there wasn't such a thing as pants in the world!

MRS. D. What a wish that is! Perty looking world it would be without pants, wouldn't it?

TAD. Don't care!

MRS. D. Don't care? You're an ungrateful child, after all the trouble and expense yer Pa Ducklow and me have been to, to feed and clothe ye. Where'd ye be now, do ye think, if we hadn't adopted ye?

TAD. I shouldn't be goin' to bed when I don't want ter!

MRS. D. You wouldn't be going to bed when you *do* want to, more likely; for ten to one ye wouldn't have a bed to go to. Are ye goin'? (*Reaches for rattan.*)

TAD (*screams, and darts to chamber door*). Yes! I'm 'most undressed a'ready! (*Disappears behind the door.*)

MRS. D. You better! Fling me yer pants. (*Aside.*) I was determined to have *him* out o' the way 'fore his Pa Ducklow comes home; for I wouldn't have that boy git an idee of what's goin' on, for then everybody'd know.

TAD (*his head re-appears from behind the door, his hands holding his trousers*). If she likes to mend so, let her! (*Tears them.*)

MRS. D. Taddy! are ye tearin' them pants?

TAD. I was pullin' on 'em off. I never see such mean cloth; can't touch it, but it tears. Say, Ma Ducklow! do ye think he'll bring me home a new drum?

MRS. D. You'll know in the mornin'.

TAD. I want to know to-night. He said mabby he would. Say! can't I set up?

MRS. D. (*rising, and seizing rattan*). I'll let ye know whether ye can set up after you've been told so many times! (*Rushes towards chamber door.*)

TAD (*flings his trousers at her, and disappears*). I'm abed! Say, Ma Ducklow, I'm abed! I'm 'most asleep a'ready!

MRS. D. It's a good thing for you, you be! (*Takes up trousers.*) Why, Taddy, you did tear 'em! I've a good notion — (*Starts angrily towards the chamber door, but stops to listen.*) There comes his Pa Ducklow! I hear the wagon! (*Hurriedly puts up rattan, and opens door, c.*) That you?

MR. DUCKLOW (*without*). Yes.

MRS. D. Ye want the lantern?

MR. D. (*without*). No; just set the lamp in the winder. Whoa!

(TADDY'S face re-appears, peeping. MRS. D. sets lamp in window.)

TAD. Has he brought me a drum?

MRS. D. (*rushes for the rattan*). You go to bed, and go to sleep, or you'll git drummed!

TAD (*screams and disappears*). I be! I be!

MRS. D. There! (*Shuts chamber door.*) Don't let me hear another word out of your mouth to-night, if you know what's good for yourself!

(*As she is going TAD puts out his fist, and shakes it at her back.* MRS. D. sets tea-pot, toast, &c., on the table, and arranges dishes. Enter MR. DUCKLOW, c., with parcels.)

MRS. D. Oh! did you buy? (*Replaces lamp on table.*)

MR. D. (*Puts down parcels on the table, and points interrogatively at chamber door*). Hey?

MRS. D. Taddy? He's 'abed; though I never in my life had such a time gittin' him off out of the way, for he'd somehow got the idee that you was to bring somethin', and he wanted to set up and see what it was.

MR. D. Strange how children will ketch things sometimes, best ye can do to prevent!

MRS. D. But did ye buy?

MR. D. Ye better jest take them matches, and put 'em out o' the way, first thing, 'fore ye forgit it. Matches are dangerous to have layin' round, and I never feel safe till they're safe. (*Hangs up hat and overcoat on pegs.*)

MRS. D. (*having hastily put away bunch of matches in tin pail on sink-shelf*). Come! what's the use of keepin' me in suspense? Did ye buy?

MR. D. (*taking down bootjack*). Where did ye put 'em?

MRS. D. (*sharply*). In the tin pail, where we always keep 'em, of course!

MR. D. Ye needn't be so cross. I asked 'cause I didn't

hear ye put the cover on. I don't believe ye *did* put the cover on either, an' I sha'n't be easy till ye do.

MRS. D. (*puts on pail-cover with a sharp clatter*). I hope ye heard that !

MR. D. (*looks frowningly at her, then proceeds to pull off boot, toe under the round of a chair, on which he leans*). Anybody been here to-day ?

MRS. D. No ! (*Sits down to patch TADDY'S trousers.*)

MR. D. Ye been anywhere ?

MRS. D. Yes !

MR. D. (*with excessive mildness*). Where ?

MRS. D. No matter !

MR. D. Wal, you be the most uncomf'table woman to git along with, ever I see !

MRS. D. If you can't take the trouble to answer my questions, I don't see why I should answer yours. Yer supper's ready : eat it when ye please.

MR. D. I was answerin' ye fast as I could.

MRS. D. I haven't seen any signs on't.

MR. D. Wal, wal ! ye don't see every thing. (*Draws off boot ; envelope containing papers falls out.*) You see now. (*Hands envelope.*)

MRS. D. (*brightening*). Oh ! indeed ! is this the — do tell ! (*Examines a paper, while TADDY peeps.*) Did you ever !. I want to know ! But what made you carry 'em in your boot so ?

MR. D. (*looks cautiously round, and speaks in a suppressed voice*). To tell the truth, I was afraid o' bein' robbed. Ye see, it's jest like so much money ! (*Arranges window-curtain.*)

MRS. D. (*alarmed*). Massy sakes !

MR. D. This is the bond, you see ; and these little things is the cowpons.

MRS. D. Oh ! them's the cowpons, be they ? But what's the good of cowpons ?

MR. D. Every six months ye cut one off, take it to the bank, and draw yer interest in gold.

MRS. D. Beautiful ! But s'pose ye lose the bonds ?

MR. D. That's what I been thinkin' on ; that's what's made me so narvous. Every bush by the road had a robber behind it, and I was glad enough to git safe home at last ; though I don't see now how we're goin' to keep the plaguy things so we sha'n't feel uneasy about 'em.

MRS. D. Massy sakes ! S'pose the house should ketch fire, or burglars should break in ? I don't wonder you was so partic'lar 'bout the matches. I shall be thinkin' of fires and burglars night and day ! Oh ! (*Utters a wild scream as TADDY, in long nightgown, peeping at chamber door, loses his balance, and plunges head foremost into the room. MR. and MRS. D. show violent alarm, and clutch the bonds.*)

MR. D. Thaddeus ! what you here for ?

TAD. Don't know ! Fell.

MR. D. Fell ! What are you out o' yer bed for ? (*Seizes TAD by the shoulder.*)

TAD. Didn't know I was !

MR. D. Didn't know you was ! (*Shakes him.*) Got up without knowin' it ! How could that happen ?

TAD. Don' know, 'thout 'twas I got up in my sleep.

MR. D. In your sleep ! (*Shakes him.*)

TAD. I guess so. I was dreamin' ye brought me home a new drum, tucked down yer boot-leg.

MR. D. (*aside to MRS. D.*) Strange ! (*To TADDY.*) How could I bring home a drum in my boot-leg ?

TAD. Don' know ; 'thout it's a new kind, one that'll shet up. Say ! did ye ? What's them things ?

(*MRS. D. replaces bonds in envelope, and ties a string around it.*)

MR. D. Nothin' little boys know any thing about. Back to bed with ye, and don't ye walk in yer sleep any more to-night, or you'll get waked up in a way ye don't like. (*Takes slippers from peg.*)

TAD. You've shook me 'most to pieces a'ready. (*Goes, whimpering.*)

MRS. D. There, there ! somebody's a-comin' !

(*A knock. MRS. D. hides bonds in her bosom. TAD retires.*)

MR. D. Who can it be this time o' night ?

MRS. D. I wish, whoever it is, they'd keep away ! Go to the door, why don't ye ? (*Scws.*)

MR. D. (*at door, c.*) Ah, Miss Beswick ! walk in. (*Enter MISS BESWICK, with shawl over her head.*)

MRS. D. What, that you ! Where on airth did ye come from. Miss Beswick ?—Set her a chair, why don't ye, father ?

MR. D. (*hurriedly putting on slippers.*) Take a seat, Miss Beswick.

MISS BESWICK. Thank ye. I s'pose you'll think I'm wild, makin' calls at this hour. (*Sits L. C.*)

MRS. D. (*aside*). What under heavens can she be after? — Why, no, I don't; you're jest in time to set up and take a cup o' tea with my husband. I sha'n't be jealous. Take off yer things, won't ye?

MISS B. Thank ye. I don't go visitin' to take off my things and drink tea this time o' night. (*Slips shawl from her head.*) I've jest run over to tell ye the news.

MRS. D. Nothin' bad, I hope! No robbers in town, for massy sake! (*Claps hand on bosom.*)

MISS B. No; good news, — good for Sophrony, at any rate.

MRS. D. Ah! she has heard from Reuben?

MISS B. No.

MR. D. (*at table, c.*). What, then, Miss Beswick?

MISS B. Reuben's come home.

MRS. D. Home!

MR. D. Come home! When?

MISS B. 'Bout an hour an' a half ago. I happened to be in to Sophrony's. I'd jest gone over to set with her a little while and keep her company, as I've often done, she seems so lonely, livin' there with her two children, her husband away so. Her friends hain't been none too attentive to her in his absence, she thinks, an' so I think.

MRS. D. I hope ye don't mean that as a hint to us, Miss Beswick.

MISS B. Take it as such or not, jest as ye please. You know best whether you've done your duty to Sophrony and her family, whilst her husband's been off to the war. You never had any boys of your own, an' so ye adopted Reuben, jest as you've lately adopted Thaddeus; an' I s'pose you think you've done well by him.

MR. D. I hope no one thinks or says the contrary. (*Eats nervously.*)

MISS B. There may be two opinions on that p'int, Mr. Ducklow. Reuben come to you when he was jest old enough to be of use about the house and on the farm; and, if I recollect right, ye didn't incourage idleness in him very much; no, indeed!

MRS. D. Nobody can say we overworked the boy, or ill-used him in any way.

MISS B. No, Mis' Ducklow. But, now you've set me

talkin', I may as well speak out. Reuben was always a good boy, and a willin' boy; and he paid his way from the fust.

MR. D. I don't know about that. He was a good and willin' boy, as you say; but the expense of feedin' and clothin' on him —

MISS B. He paid his way from the fust! And latterly he was better'n any hired man to you; for he was faithful, and took an interest, as I've heard you say yourself, Mr. Ducklow.

MR. D. Reuben was faithful: I never denied that; I never denied that.

MISS B. Well, he staid with you till he was twenty-one; did ye a man's sarvice the last five years. Then ye give him what ye called a settin-out, — new suit o' clothes, yoke of oxen, some farm-tools, an' a hundred dollars in money. You, with your thousands, Mr. Ducklow, give him a hundred dollars!

MR. D. That was only a beginnin', only a beginnin', I've always said.

MISS B. An' I s'pose you'll continner to say it till the day o' yer death. Then maybe you'll remember Reuben in your will. That's the way; keep puttin' on him off, long's ye can possibly hold on to yer property yourself; then, when ye see you've got to go and leave it, give him what you ought to've gi'n him years before. There ain't much merit in that kind o' justice: did ye know it, Mr. Ducklow? He took the Moseley farm, and was doin' well; then he married Sophrony, an' a good, faithful wife she's been to him; and finally he concluded to buy the farm, an' you yourself said 'twas a good idee.

MR. D. So it was: Reuben used judgment in that; and he'd have got along well enough if it hadn't been for the war.

MISS B. Jest so! If't hadn't been for the war. That broke out, and he left to sarve his country. His business was as important, and his wife and children as dear to him, as anybody's; but he felt it his duty to go, and he went. You didn't discourage his goin', nor you didn't *incourage* him neither, as you'd ought to.

MR. D. Why! what on airth, Miss Beswick! Seems to me you've taken it upon yourself to say things that's uncalled for, to say the least. As if I didn't know my own duty and intentions!

MRS. D. I s'pose she's been talkin' with Sophrony, and she's sent her to interfere.

MISS B. Mis' Ducklow, you don't s'pose no such a thing You know Sophrony wouldn't send anybody on such an arrant; and you know I ain't a person to be made a cat's-paw of by her nor anybody else. I ain't handsome, not particularly; and I ain't wuth my thousands, like some folks I know; and I never got married, for the best reason in the world, — them I would have didn't offer themselves, and them that did offer themselves I wouldn't shake a stick at; and I ain't so good a Christian as I might be, I'm aware. I know my lacks as well as anybody; but bein' a cat's-paw ain't one of 'em. So, when you say you s'pose Sophrony sent me, I say you s'pose what ain't true, and what you know ain't true, Mis' Ducklow!

MR. D. Why can't ye leave us to do what we think's our duty? Every one ought to have that privilege.

MISS B. You think so?

MR. D. Sartin, Miss Beswick; don't you?

MISS B. Why, then, I ought to have the same.

MR. D. Of course; nobody in this house 'll prevent your doin' what you think's your duty.

MISS B. Thank ye! Much obleeged! Now, I think it's my duty to tell ye what I been tellin' ye, an' what I'm goin' to tell ye.

MR. D. Wal, wal, I can't hender yer talkin', I s'pose; though it seems a man ought to have a right to peace and quiet in his own house.

MISS B. Yes, an' in his own conscience. If you'll hearken to me now, I promise you'll have peace an' quiet in your conscience, and in your house too, as you've never had yet.

MR. D. Wal, wal!

MISS B. I s'pose you know your great fault, don't ye? Graspin', — that's your fault, that's your besettin' sin, Mr. Ducklow. You used to give it as your excuse for not helpin' Reuben more, that you had a darter to pervide for.

MR. D. So we had, so we had, Miss Beswick.

MISS B. Wal, yer darter has got married, — married a rich man (you looked out for that); an' she's pervided for, fur as property can pervide for any one. Now, without a child in the world to feel anxious about, you keep layin' up, layin' up, and 'll continner to lay up, I s'pose, till ye die, and leave a great fortin to yer darter, and jest a pittance to Reuben and Thaddeus.

MR. D. No, no, Miss Beswick: you're wrong, you're wrong, Miss Beswick! I mean to do the handsome thing by both of 'em.

MISS B. Mean to! mean to! That's the way ye flatter yer conscience, and cheat your own soul. Why don't ye do what ye mean to do at once, an' make sure on't? I tell ye, the time is comin' when the recollection of havin' done a good action will be a greater comfort to ye than all the property in the world. Then you'll look back and say, "Why didn't I do this and do that with my money, when 'twas in my power, 'stid of hoardin' up, and hoardin' up for others to spend arter me?"

MR. D. Wal, wal, Miss Beswick!

MISS B. As I said, ye didn't *discourage* Reuben goin' to the war, and ye didn't *incourage* him the way ye might. You'd ought to 've said to him, "Go, Reuben, if ye see it to be yer duty, and, as fur as money goes, ye sha'n't suffer for it; I'll see't yer debts are paid, and yer family kep' comf'table while you're away." That's jest what ye didn't say, and that's jest what ye didn't do, Mr. Ducklow. All the time Reuben's been sarvin' his country, he's had his debts and his family expenses to worry him; and it's been all Sophrony could do, by strainin' every narve, to keep her children from goin' hungry and ragged. You've helped 'em a little now and then, by driblets, — but then!

MR. D. Wal, you've read us a perty smart lectur', I must say! I can't consaive what should make ye take such an interest in our affairs.

MISS B. Take an interest! Haven't I seen Sophrony's struggles with her children? Haven't I seen Reuben come home this very night a sick man, with a broken constitution, and no prospect before him but to give up his farm, lose all he has paid, and be throwed onto the world with his wife and children? Take an interest! I wish *you* took half as much. Here I've set half an hour, an' ye haven't thought to ask how Reuben appeared, nor any thing about him.

MR. D. Maybe there's good reason for that, Miss Beswick. 'Twas on my lips to ask half a dozen times; but you've talked so fast I couldn't slip in a word edgeways.

MISS B. Wal, I'm glad you've got some excuse, though a poor one.

MRS. D. How is Reuben?

MISS B. All broke to pieces, — a mere shadder of what

he was ! He was in the hospitals with his wound, ye know ; but finally the doctors seen 't his only chance was in bein' sent home, weak as he was. Oh, if you could have seen his meetin' with Sophrony, as I did ! then you wouldn't sneer at my takin' an interest ! (*Wipes her eyes with a corner of her apron.*) It's a pity ye didn't know he was in town, when you was there to-day : then you might have brought him over. But I s'pose you had your investments to look arter. Come now, Mr. Ducklow, how many thousan' dollars have you invested sence Reuben's been off to the war, and his family has been sufferin' to home ? You may have been layin' up hundreds, or even thousan's, that way, this very day, for aught I know. (*Rises.*) But le' me tell ye, you won't git no good o' such property—it'll only be a cuss to ye—till ye do the right thing by Reuben. (*Puts shawl over her head.*)

MRS. D. Ye ain't goin', be ye, Miss Beswick ? What's yer hurry ?

MISS B. No hurry, but I've done my arrant, and said my say, an' may as well be goin'. Good-night. Good-night, Mr. Ducklow. (*Exit.*)

MRS. D. Did you ever !

MR. D. She's got a tongue.

MRS. D. Strange she should speak of your investin' money to-day ! D'ye s'pose she knows ?

MR. D. I don't see how she can. (*Walks the room in deep trouble.*) I've been careful not to give a hint on't to any one, for I knew jest what folks would say : " If Ducklow's got so much money to dispose of, he'd better give Reuben a lift." I know how folks talk.

MRS. D. Comin' here to browbeat us ! I wonder ye didn't be a little more plain with *her*, father. I wouldn't have sot and been dictated to as tamely as you did.

MR. D. You wouldn't ? Then why did ye ? She dictated to you as much as she did to me ; and you scurce opened your head ; you didn't dars' to say your soul was your own.

MRS. D. Yes, I did : I—

MR. D. You ventur'd to speak once, and she shet ye up quicker'n lightnin' ! Now tell about you wouldn't have sot and been dictated to like a tame noodle, as I did !

MRS. D. I didn't say *tame noodle* !

MR. D. Yes, ye did !

MRS. D. I tell ye I didn't !

MR. D. Ye did! I might have answered back sharp enough, but I was waiting for *you* to speak. Men don't like to dispute with women.

MRS. D. That's your git-off. You was just as much afraid of her as I was. I never see ye so cowed in all my life!

MR. D. Cowed? I wasn't cowed neither! I never see you lose sperit so: ye wilted down like a dish-rag! (*Taking his boots.*)

MRS. D. Ye haven't got to go out again to-night, have ye?

MR. D. I'm goin' over to Reuben's.

MRS. D. To Reuben's?

MR. D. Yes, I think I better. He and Sophrony'll know we heard of his gettin' home, and they're enough inclined a'ready to think we neglect 'em. Haven't ye got somethin' ye can send?

MRS. D. I don't know. I've scurce ever been over to Sophrony's, but I've carried her a pie or cake or somethin'; and mighty little thanks I've got for it, as it turns out.

MR. D. Why didn't you say *that* to Miss Beswick, when she was runnin' us so hard about never doin' any thing for 'em?

MRS. D. 'Twouldn't have done no good. I know jest what she would say: "What's jest a pie or cake now and then?" Dear me! what have I been doin'? Sewin' my apron to the seat of Taddy's pants, sure as I'm alive! (*Holds up the pants.*) I do wish folks would mind their own business, and stay to home!

MR. D. (*putting on overcoat*). You've got the bonds safe?

MRS. D. Yes, and tied a string around the wrapper. But I won't engage to keep 'em safe. They make me terrible fidgety!

MR. D. Don't be foolish.

MRS. D. I'm afraid to be left alone in the house with 'em! Here, take 'em!

MR. D. What possible harm can happen to them or you while I'm away? You don't s'pose I want to lug 'em around with me wherever I go, do ye?

MRS. D. I don't see what under the sun we're goin' to do with 'em! If we go out we can't take 'em with us for fear of 'losin' 'em, or of bein' robbed; and we sha'n't dare to leave 'em to home, fear the house'll burn up or be broke into. I

don't know but it'll be about as Miss Beswick says : we sha'n't take no comfort with property we ought to make over to Reuben.

MR. D. Do *you* think we ought to make it over to Reuben? If ye do, it's new to me!

MRS. D. I guess we better put 'em into the clock-case for to-night, hadn't we?

MR. D. Just where they'll be discovered if the house is robbed! No, I've an idee. Slip 'em under the bedroom carpet. Le' me take 'em. I can fix a place right here by the door.

(*As they are concealing the bonds, R., TADDY enters softly, L., on tiptoe, watching them.*)

MRS. D. That's jest the place fer 'em!

MR. D. I defy anybody to find 'em there! What noise was that?

MRS. D. Thaddeus! (TADDY *darts back.*) Thaddeus! (*He stops.*) What do you want now, you sir?

TAD. I want you to scratch my back.

MRS. D. (*seizes rattan*) I'll scratch your back for ye! (*Pursues him out by chamber door; TADDY'S screams and sounds of rattan are heard. MRS. D. re-enters.*) He won't want his back scratched again for one while! (*Puts up rattan.*)

MR. D. S'pose he see us?

MRS. D. If he did, I've whipped it out of him! Don't think of goin' over to Reuben's to-night. It's nine o'clock: they'll all be locked up and abed and asleep, like as not. Wait till mornin', and I'll ride over with ye. (*Clears table; takes dishes to sink*)

MR. D. Wal, I s'pose I must do as you say. (*Takes off overcoat and boots.*) I can't help thinkin' of Miss Beswick: I never was so worked up in my life!

MRS. D. Wal, wal, forgit it!

MR. D. I feel as though I ought to've gone over to Reuben's; and I should have gone if 't hadn't been for you.

MRS. D. Now, how unreasonable to blame me! I only reminded you how late it was.

MR. D. I s'pose I may as well go to bed, but I don't believe I shall sleep a wink. (*Lays coat and vest on chair; locks the door; winds the clock.*)

MRS. D. I shall sleep with a clear conscience. Miss Beswick can't make me lose a wink o' sleep. Did ye lock the door?

MR. D. Ye don't think I'd neglect that, with cowpon bonds in the house, do ye? (*Retires to bedroom.*)

MRS. D. Can't be too careful. (*Tries the lock.*) I'll leave the dishes till mornin'. (*Tries window fastening.*) Massy sakes alive!

MR. D. (*puts his head out of the bedroom, with nightcap on*). What, mother?

MRS. D. You didn't pull the curtain clear down on this side; and anybody might have looked in, and seen us put — you know what — under the — you know.

MR. D. Nonsense! Don't be so foolish. Come to bed. (*Withdraws.*)

MRS. D. I should 'a' thought you'd been more careful about the curtain! (*Exit R. with lamp. Stage darkened.*)

(MR. D. *re-enters, in nightgown over pants and stockings.*)

MR. D. Like as not, when she tried to lock the door after me, she unlocked it. (*Gropes his way to door; tries lock; then tries window-fastenings.*) These cowpon bonds make me dre'ful skittish somehow!

MRS. D. (*sharply, from bedroom*). Why don't ye come to bed?

MR. D. Wal, wal! (*Withdraws.*)

(*Sound of voices without; they grow loud and distinct.*)

MRS. D. You did!

MR. D. I didn't!

MRS. D. I say you did!

MR. D. Wal, wal! No use disputin'. What's the matter now?

MRS. D. Hush! (*Enters R.; nightcap on her head, shawl over her shoulders, petticoat and stockings visible. Pauses to listen.*)

MR. D. (*shows his head*). What did ye hear?

MRS. D. Hush! I thought as much as could be I heard somebody gettin' into the winder!

MR. D. That's all your narvousness! Why can't ye come to bed and be quiet? (*Withdraws.*)

MRS. D. I never in my life heard the floors creak so! Seems as though there was somebody in the house. (*Withdraws.*)

MR. D. (*re-appears, snuffing*).

MRS. D. (*shows her head*). What's the matter now?

MR. D. (*snuffs*). Don't you smell somethin'?

MRS. D. (*snuffs*). Why, no — yes — I do' know! (*They both snuff.*)

MR. D. Somethin' burnin'!

MRS. D. Can't be the matches, can it? (*Both snuff.*)

MR. D. I thought of the matches. Good heavens!

MRS. D. Why! what, father?

MR. D. Taddy's been walkin' in his sleep again, found the matches, and sot the house afire!

MRS. D. Massy sakes! No! here's the matches all safe. It's all your imagination, father.

MR. D. *My* imagination! You was jest as frightened as I was. I smelt somethin', sartin! though I can't smell it now (*snuffs*), not quite so distinck.

MRS. D. I'm sure I wa'n't a bit frightened! But I thought I heard somebody in the house once. I wish you'd jest put your hand down, and see if — you know what — is still there.

MR. D. There? of course it is. (*Feels for the bonds.*) Good gracious!

MRS. D. They ain't gone, be they?

MR. D. Sure as the world! No, here they be! I didn't feel in the right place.

MRS. D. How you did frighten me! My heart almost jumped out of my mouth! You're so plaguy narvous, I won't sleep with ye, but jest lop down on the lounge as I be! (*Withdraws.*)

MR. D. Wal, wal! If I'm any more narvous'n you be, I'm to be pitied! (*Withdraws.*)

(*Silence. Dark stage. A snore from MR. D. Presently*

MRS. D. *re-appears, groping cautiously.*)

MRS. D. How he can sleep, I don't see! I'm sure I heard somebody breakin' into the door this time. (*Gropes.*)

MR. D. (*re-appears*). Somethin' woke me! (*Listens.*) How she can sleep there on that lounge so, when the house is full of noises, I can't consaive! I'm sure I heard the door.

(*Both grope, and finally, coming together, utter screams of terror, when the curtain falls.*)

ACT II.

SCENE. — SITTING-ROOM IN REUBEN'S HOUSE.

Table in rear, R. Sofa, L., towards front of stage. Enter FERRING and JEPWORTH, R., conversing.

FERRING. War's a humbug, war's a humbug, Neighbor Jepworth! (*Puts hat on table.*)

JEPWORTH. The war is to save the country. (*Places hat on table.*)

FER. Country's ruined, country's ruined, Neighbor Jepworth! We have no country.

JEP. Unless the Rebellion can be put down.

FER. Can't be put down, can't be put down, Neighbor Jepworth! What's the use of our young men throwing away their lives in this way? Look at Reuben! lost his health, lost his farm, — fine a young fellow as ever was, — have to go to the poorhouse!

JEP. His friends won't allow that.

FER. Who are his friends?

JEP. Why, there's Ducklow.

FER. (*snaps his fingers*). So much for Ducklow! Reuben's adopted father pretends to be a Union man; but what's he done for the Union or for Reuben? Both'll go to ruin for all he'll ever do to save 'em!

JEP. Here's Reuben now. Poor fellow! (*Exit L.*)

FER. I've great respect for Reuben; but the war's a humbug, war's a humbug, Neighbor Jepworth! (*Follows JEPWORTH out. Enter R., MR. DUCKLOW in overcoat and hat, and MRS. DUCKLOW in cloak, bonnet, &c.*)

MR. D. I thought we was goin' to be here the fust ones; show our good-will to Reuben by comin' airy; but I believe some of the neighbors are here before us. Now, there'll be remarks about that! (*Places hat on floor at end of sofa.*)

MRS. D. I had a glimpse of Miss Beswick at the winder!

MR. D. She agin!

MRS. D. I've as good a notion to turn round and go straight home as ever I had to eat. (*Takes off bonnet.*)

MR. D. We might have got off sooner, if you hadn't been so late about breakfast.

MRS. D. I late! 'Twas you that overslep' yourself.

MR. D. No wonder if I did drowse a little this mornin', after you'd kep' me awake half the night with your narvousness.

MRS. D. My narvousness! (*Takes off cloak.*)

MR. D. No use bein' so foolish. We might live in the house a hundred years, and not hear of a robber or a fire. Ye only excite yerself, and keep me awake.

MRS. D. (*smoothing her hair*). I should like to know if you didn't git jest as excited as I did, and rob me of my sleep jest as much as I did you!

MR. D. Wal, wal! We must find Reuben. Why, here he comes! (*Enter L., REUBEN, his right arm in a sling, SOPHRONIA supporting him, MISS BESWICK, FERRING, and JEPWORTH.*)

MRS. D. Dear me! how pale!

MR. D. Wal, Reuben! glad to see ye, glad to see ye! (*Shakes REUBEN's left hand.*) This is a joyful day I scurce ever expected to see! Why, ye don't look so sick as I thought ye would! — Does he, mother?

MRS. D. I'd no idee he could be so very, so very pale and thin! (*Uses handkerchief*) Had you, Sophrony?

SOPHRONIA. I don't know what I thought: I only know I have him now. He has come home! He shall never leave me again, never, never!

(*SOPHRONIA and MISS BESWICK carefully place REUBEN in a reclining posture on the sofa. DUCKLOW shakes hands with FERRING and JEPWORTH in the background, then talks with REUBEN. FERRING assumes argumentative attitude towards JEPWORTH.*)

MRS. D. (*to SOPHRONIA*). Wasn't it terrible to see him brought home so?

SOPH. Oh, yes! But I was so thankful! I felt the worst was over, and I had him again. He is no longer hundreds of miles away, among strangers, where I cannot go to him; though I should have gone long ago, as you know, if I could have raised the means, and if it hadn't been for the children.

MRS. D. Mr. Ducklow would have — tried — to help you to the means, and I would have taken the children, if we had thought it best for you to go. But you see now it wasn't best, don't you?

SOPH. Whether it was or not, I don't complain. I'm too happy to-day to complain of any thing. Only I've dreamt so often of his coming home, and woke to find it was all a dream, I'm half afraid to be as happy as I might be.

REUBEN (*sitting up*). Be as happy as you please, Sophrony! I'm just where I want to be, of all places in this world; or the next world, I may say, for that matter, for I can't conceive of any greater heaven than I'm in now. I'm going to get well, in spite of the doctors. Coming home is the best medicine for a fellow in my condition, — not bad to take, either. To think that's my boy, my Ruby, Pa Ducklow! Why, he was a mere baby when I went away!

SOPH. Reuben, Reuben! you're talking too much. You promised me you wouldn't, you know.

REUB. Well, well, I won't. But, when a fellow's heart is chock-full, it's hard to shut down on it sometimes. Don't look so, friends, as if you pitied me. I ain't to be pitied. I bet there isn't one of you half so happy as I am at this minute.

SOPH. Here's Miss Beswick, Mother Ducklow: haven't you noticed her?

MRS. D. Oh! how d'ye do, Miss Beswick?

MISS BESWICK (*who has been dusting and arranging things in the room*). Tryin' to keep out of the way, and make myself useful. (*Exit.*)

SOPH. I don't know what I should do without her. She took right hold and helped me last night; then she came in, the first thing, this morning. "Go right to your husband; don't leave him for a minute," says she: "I'll tend to the work. There'll be plenty of folks coming in to hinder; but I come in to help," says she. There's no use opposin' her: that you know, Mother Ducklow.

MRS. D. Yes, she likes to have her own way about things: I've found that out!

SOPH. It seems she called at the door last night to tell you Reuben had come home.

MRS. D. Called at the door! Didn't she tell you she stopped and made us a visit?

SOPH. No, indeed! Did she?

MRS. D. (*aside*). I guess I hadn't better say much about that! Oh, yes! a visit, for *her*; she ain't no great hand to make long stops, you know.

SOPH. Only where she's needed. Then she never thinks of going, as long as she sees any thing to do. Reuben, Reuben! you mustn't talk, Reuben.

JEP. I was saying, it'll be too bad now if you have to give up this place; but he—

SOPH. We are not going to be worried about that. We have all we can think of and attend to to-day; and the future will take care of itself.

MR. D. That's right; that's the way to talk. Providence'll take care of ye, ye may be sure.

FER. I should think you might get Ditson to renew the mortgage. He can't be hard on you, under the circumstances. And he can't want the money. There's no security like real estate, nothing like real estate. If I had money to invest, I wouldn't put it into any thing else.

MR. D. Nor I! Nothing like real estate.

JEP. What do you think of Government bonds, Ducklow?

MR. D. Wal, I don't know. It may be a patriotic duty to lend to Gov'ment, if one has the funds to spare. Wish I had!

FER. No use, no use! Country's ruined! Country's ruined!

JEP. Ruined, perhaps,—unless we lend money to the Government to carry on the war.

3 REUB. What do you think of us, Mr. Ferring, who have gone into the war, and been willing to risk every thing, not only our business and our property, but life and limb? I've ruined myself personally, lost my property and my health, to be of service to my country; and I don't regret it. I'm a tolerably patient, philosophical fellow. But I haven't patience and philosophy enough to sit quiet and hear men cry out, *The country's ruined!* while they stop at home and don't do the first thing,—not even lend their money,—to help save the country.

MR. D. Good for you, Reuben!—(*Aside*.) Seems I've only done my duty to the Gov'ment, let Miss Beswick say what she will.—You put the case so strong, Reuben, I re'ly believe, if I had funds to spare, I shouldn't hesitate a minute, but go right off and invest in coupon bonds.

FER. 'Twould be the worst investment ye could make, — the very worst!

MR. D. Think so?

FER. I know so. Government will repudiate. It will *have* to repudiate. This enormous debt they're piling up never can be paid.

MR. D. I — I don't — I can't think that!

FER. Your interest in gold is a temptation just now; but that won't be paid much longer; then (*snaps his fingers*) that for your bonds!

MR. D. That's your way of looking at it. I — I don't believe I should be frightened, even if I *had* cowpon bonds on my hands. I wish I had; I re'ly wish I had a lot o' them bonds! Don't you, Jepworth?

JEP. They're mighty risky things to have in the house.

FER. That's so! I read in the papers almost every day of somebody losing his coupon bonds. One man carried his in his boot — walked farther than he intended — bond all wore up to little chips of paper — *his* thousand dollars gone! Another thought he would hide his in the sitting-room stove, — summer time — didn't think of anybody making a fire — cold storm — wife had company — started a little fire to take off the chill of the room, and dry their clothes — husband came home — found *his* three thousand dollars all smoke and ashes! Another man hid his bonds where robbers couldn't find 'em — house took fire when he was away — folks saved every thing but the bonds, which they couldn't find — *his* money gone to the old scratch!

MRS. D. Massy sakes!

MR. D. I hope Taddy won't play with the matches! I charged him not to.

MRS. D. So did I; but he's always sure to do the very thing he's told not to!

4 REUB. There's this thing to be considered in favor of fires, — if your bonds burn up, they won't have to be paid; so what's your loss is the country's gain.

MR. D. Yes! that is — that is — a consolation! — (*Aside.*) I'm terrible consarned about Taddy! (*Withdraws, R.*)

JEP. One would think Ducklow had some of them bonds, he looked so anxious all at once. He has, hasn't he, Mrs. Ducklow?

MRS. D. Has what?

JEP. Some of them cowpon bonds? I ruther guess he's got some.

MRS. D. You mean Gov'ment bonds? My husband got some? 'Tain't at all likely he'd invest in 'em without sayin' somethin' to *me* about it. No, he couldn't have any without my knowin' it, I'm sure.

FER. And of course he wouldn't be buyin' bonds, when here's Reuben's house to be sold over his head for want of a thousand or two dollars.

MRS. D. Of course he wouldn't. (*Re-enter DUCKLOW, excitedly.*)

MR. D. There's a smoke in the direction of my house! (*Seizes hat from table.*)

MRS. D. Oh, that Taddy!

MR. D. He's set the house afire!

FER. You've got my hat, neighbor!

MR. D. Have I? (*Seizes another.*) Fire, fire!

JEP. That's *my* hat, I believe!

MR. D. Where in creation is *my* hat? (*Claps JEPWORTH'S hat on his head, and snatches up FERRING'S hat again.*) Heavens and airth! (*Finds his own hat, and sets off with it in his hand; drops FERRING'S.*) Fire! fire! fire! (*Rushes off R. FERRING and JEPWORTH run to recover their hats. Commotion. Quick curtain.*)

ACT III.

SCENE. — ROADSIDE BEFORE DUCKLOW'S FARM-HOUSE.*

Enter TADDY, L., with sticks for kite-frame, whittling.

TADDY. If I can't have a drum, I'll have a kite. Gay, I tell ye! (*Crosses sticks.*) Jerushy! won't she be a buster! (*Holds up frame, and runs with it. Distant cries.*) Hullo! what's that yellin'? Fire! Oh, good! Hurrah for some fun! (*As he is rushing off, R., MR. DUCKLOW rushes on, meeting him.*)

MR. D. Thaddeus! where ye goin'?

TAD. Goin' to the fire!

MR. D. There ain't any fire, boy!

TAD. Yes, there is; don't ye hear 'em? they've been yellin' like fury!

MR. D. Stop, I tell ye! It's all over; only the plaguy rogues have got to yellin', and they won't stop. 'Twas nothin' but Jepworth's brush-heap a-burnin'.

TAD. That all? I thought there was goin' to be some fun! I wonder who was such a darned fool as to yell fire for nothin' but an old brush-heap!

MR. D. Wal, wal! hold your tongue, boy! you don't know what you're talkin' about. I've got to drive over to town: you go and stand by the mare, while I brush my hat. (*Aside.*) I believe I got my own hat at last. (*Looks at hat.*) Though I can't tell by the looks: I lost it off on the road, and drove the wagon-wheel over it.

TAD. Why didn't Ma Ducklow come home with ye?

MR. D. I come off in somethin' of a hurry.

TAD. What was yer hurry?

MR. D. Little boys shouldn't ask so many questions. (*Enters house.*)

* Where there is a scarcity of scenery, this act can easily be arranged to be played inside the Ducklow house.

TAD. (*whittles*). I'll have a string two miles long, and let my kite up so high they can't see it. I'll beat Dick Atkins's kite all holler! (*Crosses sticks.*)

(DUCKLOW *re-appears*.)

MR. D. Heavens an' airth! Taddy!

TAD. (*guiltily*). What?

MR. D. What have you been doin' to the carpet? (*Seizes him.*)

TAD. Nothin'. 'Twa'n't me.

MR. D. (*shakes him.*) Don't tell me 'twa'n't you!

TAD. I only jest pulled it up a little.

MR. D. Pulled it up a little! What did you pull it up for?

TAD. Lost a marble!

MR. D. Lost a marble! Ye didn't lose it under the carpet, did ye?

TAD. Didn't know but it might 'a' got under: marbles roll so.

MR. D. And didn't you take any thing out?

TAD. No!

MR. D. If I find you did, I'll take a rope's end to you! (*Re-enters house.*)

TAD. He'll kill me! Oh-h-h! I wish the house had burnt up. I'll tell him 'twas Dick Atkins. (*DUCKLOW re-appears, putting envelope into his breast-pocket*)

MR. D. Lucky for you, sir, you didn't do any more mischief! Don't you touch the carpet again if you lose a million marbles.

TAD. Hain't got a million. Won't ye buy me some to-day? Say! won't ye buy me some marbles?

MR. D. Go and stand by the mare, and don't ye leave her till I come, or I'll *marble* ye!

TAD. Wish I had some! (*Going.*)

MR. D. What in thunderation to do with these 'ere bonds I don't know! I don't dare to leave 'em in the house; I don't dare to carry 'em with me; they're the plague of my life. I know! I'll ask 'em to keep 'em for me to the bank, lock 'em up in their safe. (*Going.*)

TAD. There's somethin' losin' out of your pocket.

MR. D. (*in consternation, claps hand to his breast*). Where, you villain?

TAD. Yer side-pocket; it's one of your mittens.

MR. D. I'll *mitten* ye! (*Pursues TADDY out, R. Sounds*

as of boxed ears and TADDY'S screams are heard. TADDY re-enters.)

TAD. (*grinning*). Didn't hurt me! (*Scowls, turns, and shakes his fist.*) Old fool! I *will* have a kite now, darn him! (*Whitties.*) He didn't find out! Guess, when he does, he'll wish he'd bought me the drum. (*Crosses sticks.*) Hullo, Dick! (*Enter DICK ATKINS, with jug, L.*)

DICK. Hullo, Tad!

TAD. Where ye goin' with yer jug?

DICK. Over to the grocery to git some molasses.

TAD. Oh goody-good! Come back this way, and give us a lick!

DICK. Guess the folks'll give me a lick if I do!

TAD. They won't know it. Ain't there some left in the jug now? Oh, give me a suck o' that stopple!

DICK. Git out! What ye makin'?

TAD. Frame for a kite. Here! you let them sticks alone!

DICK (*sets down jug, and snatches sticks*). Le' me look at 'em, I tell ye! What ye 'fraid of?

TAD. You'll break 'em.

DICK. No I won't break 'em, nuther! That ain't the way to make a kite.

TAD. (*takes stopple out of jug, and sucks it*). That's all you know about it.

DICK. Ye ought to have another stick, and cross 'em so. (*Crosses sticks.*)

TAD. What does a feller want of a hundred sticks? (*Sits down, with jug between his knees; puts finger in, and sucks it.*)

DICK. What ye goin' to cover it with?

TAD. Oh, I got a cover! Good deal better'n that newspaper you give me. It's goin' to be the bulliest kite ever you set eyes on! Fancy! (*Sucks finger.*)

DICK. Le' me see yer cover.

TAD. You'll tell!

DICK. No, I won't. Here! keep out of that jug!

TAD. I ain't in the jug!

DICK. You was! I seen ye! (*Takes jug.*) Give me that stopple! You been suckin' it!

TAD. There wa'n't no suck to it. Take yer darned old stopple!

DICK. I've a good notion to stick it down your throat!

Come, show me yer kite-cover ; mabby I'll trade with ye for it. Hey ? Look a' that ! (*Shows handful of marbles.*) See that agate ? See them bull's-eyes ? hey ? Don't you wish you had some ?

TAD. Oh, le' me look !

DICK. No, sir-ee, bob ! (*Pockets marbles.*) Not without you'll show me your kite-cover.

TAD. You promise not to tell ?

DICK. Course I won't tell !

TAD. I've got it hid. Pa Ducklow'll wring my neck if he finds out !

DICK. Better trade, then. (*Exeunt, L.*)

(*Enter REV. MR. GRANTLEY, * R. Knocks at door.*)

• MR. G. Folks gone from home, I wonder ? (*Knocks.*) Door wasn't locked ! (*Opens, and looks in ; knocks again. Enter TADDY, L.*) Ah, Thaddeus, my boy ! Where's your Pa Ducklow ?

TAD (*all in a breath*). Gone to town won't be back till night give me a ride ?

MR. G. Is your Ma Ducklow at home ?

TAD. She's gone over to Reub's got home last night say may I ride ?

MR. G. Why, yes, my boy ; you may ride a little way, if you'll run right back home when I set you down.

TAD. Course I will ! (*Aside.*) Dick's comin' back this way with the molasses, and's goin' to trade with me, and give me a lick ! (*Licks his chops, and exit with MR. G., L. Enter MRS. DUCKLOW, R.*)

MRS. D. (*out of breath*). Who's that in the shay, I'd like to know ? I hope Taddy's to home, to keep the house all right. Strange father should be so foolish as to think it was burnin' up ! He does beat all the narvous and excitable men 't ever I see ! The door open ! Thaddeus ! Thad-de-us ! (*Calling.*) Where under the sun can that boy be ? (*Enters house, but presently re-appears, greatly excited.*) Murder ! murder ! stop thief ! stop thief ! Carpet pulled up — bonds gone — the man in the shay ! THAD-DE-US ! Murder ! murder !

(*Enter JEPWORTH, R.*)

* Where it is possible, as on the stage of a large theatre, the old minister should drive on in an old-fashioned chaise, get out, and hitch his horse with a weight, saying, "Whoa ! Be still now !" &c.

JEP. What's the matter, Mrs. Ducklow?

MRS. D. The man in the shay!

JEP. What's the man in the shay done?

MRS. D. Robbed!

JEP. Who has he robbed?

MRS. D. Murdered!

JEP. Who has he murdered?

MRS. D. Thaddeus, I'm afraid! He's robbed the house! Ketch it! Ketch the shay!

JEP. I'll overhaul him! (*Exit, L.*)

MRS. D. Good Mr. Jepworth! I wouldn't have believed he could run so! I've no more power to move than as if I weighed a ton! He must have killed Taddy, and flung him into the well! He's stopped the shay! it's turnin' round! Jepworth's bringin' on him back! I must git somethin' to defend myself! (*Goes into the house, and comes out with a broom, which she brandishes.*) Stop, you thief! don't you come near me! What have you done with Thaddeus? what have you done with them things you found under the carpet? (*Enter L. MR. GRANTLEY, with TADDY * behind him; then JEPWORTH, laughing.*)

JEP. Here's your robber, Mrs. Ducklow.

MRS. D. Mr. Grantley! our minister!

MR. G. What's the trouble, Sister Ducklow? Mr. Jepworth says I've robbed you.

MRS. D. No, no! not you! You wouldn't do such a thing! But didn't you stop to our house? Have you seen our Thaddeus?

TAD. (*from behind MR. G.*) Here I be, Ma Ducklow!

MRS. D. Taddy! Taddy! how come the carpet pulled up?

TAD. I pulled it up, a-huntin' fer a marble.

MRS. D. And the thing tied up in a yaller wrapper?

TAD. Pa Ducklow took it.

MRS. D. Ye sure?

TAD. Yes, I seen him. Put it in his pocket.

MRS. D. Oh, dear! I never was so beat! Mr. Grantley — I hope — excuse me — I've had such a scare I didn't know what I was about! — Taddy, you notty boy! What did you leave the house for? I told you! (*Seizes him.*)

MR. G. It was partly my fault, Sister Ducklow. I told

* In the chaise if possible.

him he might ride a little way. I'm glad no worse thing has happened. Good-morning. (*Exit, smiling.*)

MRS. D. I never was so mortified in my life. I'm much obleeged to ye, Mr. Jepworth; but, when ye see 'twas the minister in the shay, I should thought you'd have knowed 'twas a mistake.

JEP. Yes; but I thought he had better bring Taddy back, then you could see with your own eyes. What did you think you had lost?

MRS. D. Oh! nothing of any consequence — particularly — only I didn't know what a stranger might not have taken. Very much obleeged to ye!

JEP. Not at all. (*Exit.*)

MRS. D. Now, ye sir!

TAD. O Ma Ducklow, don't lick me! don't lick me! Pa Ducklow gave me an awful thrashin' for pullin' up the carpet, and I promised never to do so agin.

MRS. D. There he comes now! Go and take the hoss. (*Exit TADDY, running, R.*) He might 'a' knowed how scared I'd be to find the carpet pulled up, and the bonds gone. (*Enter DUCKLOW, R.*) Did ye take 'em? you know — the bonds?

MR. D. Sartin I did.

MRS. D. Didn't ye think how frightened I'd be?

MR. D. Why, I thought you'd stay to Reuben's till I went back for ye.

MRS. D. Stay there all day, after you'd give me such a start, with yer alarm of fire! That foolish alarm! How could you be so childish?

MR. D. Wal, wal!

MRS. D. Have you got 'em now?

MR. D. Don't be so eager! Guess I can take care of 'em. I thought the best thing to do with 'em was to leave 'em in the bank, for safe keepin': so I went to the cashier, and he said he'd lock 'em up in their safe till called for. But he said he wouldn't be responsible for em' case of accidents.

MRS. D. And you left 'em with him after that! How could you be so careless?

MR. D. Wal, I thought they'd be safer there.

MRS. D. They give ye a receipt for 'em, of course?

MR. D. No, they didn't.

MRS. D. Pa Ducklow!

MR. D. Wal, wal ! Hear me through. As I was waitin' in the store, after that, I ketched up a newspaper, and read, "*Bank robbery ! Bonds stolen !*"

MRS. D. Not your bank ! not your bonds !

MR. D. No, no, course not ! But it made me think o' my bonds. So I rushed back there, and told the cashier I guessed I wouldn't trouble him to keep 'em.

MRS. D. And he give 'em to ye ?

MR. D. Sartin. Wrapper tied up jest as I give it to him. I put some pins in my pocket to keep it from losin' out. (*Takes out pins ; MRS. D. assists him.*)

MRS. D. Wal, you was careful for once !

MR. D. For once ? Ain't I always careful ? There s yer wrapper.

MRS. D. How do you know it hain't been untied ?

MR. D. 'Tain't at all likely he'd untie it.

MRS. D. What ye goin' to do with 'em now ? I 'most wish you'd left 'em to the bank.

MR. D. Wal, you are the most inconsistent woman ever I see !

MRS. D. Inconsistent ! I don't know what better you can do with 'em.

MR. D. I'll tell ye. I see Josiah over to the village.

MRS. D. Our son-in-law ?

MR. D. Yes. I got talkin' with him, and led the subject to Gov'ment bonds. "What do you think of them for an investment?" says I. "The very best!" says he. "So I thought," says I. "But how 'bout them air cowpon bonds ? Ain't they ruther ticklish property to have in the house?" says I.

MRS. D. I want to know if you asked him that !

MR. D. "Wal, I don't know," says he. "Think how many years you keep old bills and documents, and never think of losin' 'em. Ain't a mite more danger with the bonds, as I see," says he. "I shouldn't want to carry 'em round with me to a very great amount, — though I did once carry three thousand-dollar bonds in my pocket once for a week," says he. "Curi's !" says I. "I've got three thousand-dollar bonds in my pocket now !"

MRS. D. Did you tell him that ! What did he say ?

MR. D. All he said was, "It's good property." "Seems to me, though," says I, "if I had a safe, as you've got, I should keep my bonds in it." He said he did gene-

rally, but he was travellin' that week. "Suppose," says I, "you keep my bonds with yours, in your safe," says I: "I shall feel easier."

MRS. D. Did you say that? And what did he say?

MR. D. Said "All right," they'd be safe, bring 'em over; but I'd better cut off the May cowpons fust. I'm goin' to do it now, and take the bonds right over.

MRS. D. Why, that will be best, after all.

MR. D. Got your scissors? (MRS. D. *takes scissors from her pocket.* MR. D. *takes from the envelope an old newspaper.* TADDY *peeps in, R., frightened.*)

MRS. D. Massy sakes, father! what ye got there!

MR. D. "Sunday Visitor!" Heavens an' airth!

(*Curtain.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE. — SAME AS ACT II.

Enter, L., FERRING and REUBEN, conversing.

FERRING. I don't believe in the war, Reuben, but I do believe in you. I give up the Union, but I don't give you up.

REUBEN. I don't see but you may as well give me up too. I was full of hope and thankfulness when I first got home; but now I'm beginning to see how blue things look. I don't imagine I shall be able to do any work to speak of this season, with my broken health and this wounded arm. Every thing's behind-hand, with the payments on the mortgage.

FER. We'll get up a subscription-paper for you. War's a humbug, war's a perfect humbug, as I've always said; but there's no humbug about you, — no humbug about you, Reuben! I'll head the subscription; everybody 'll give, — everybody, — even Ducklow! ha, ha!

REUB. I can't bear to be an object of charity. Poor Sophrony!

FER. No charity at all. It's what society owes to you. You've been fighting for the country, — a mistaken notion: we've no country worth fighting for; but you are honest in it, — and society owes it to you, not to see you suffer.

REUB. But to have a subscription-paper go round! I can't allow it.

FER. Ducklow's the man that ought not to allow it. It'll be a shame to him; no shame at all to you, Reuben. I've talked with Miss Beswick. She'll circulate it among her friends. I'll circulate it among mine. Mine don't believe in the war, won't do any thing to fight the South; but they'll do something for you.

REUB. It will be a great humiliation. I don't know

what to say. Come and talk with Sophrony. I can't agree to any thing without her consent.

FER. That's right, that's right. Husband and wife should be agreed. I'm a union man in *that* sense. That's the kind of union *I* believe in. (*They go out, L. Enter, R., MR. DUCKLOW in hat and smock frock, and MRS. DUCKLOW in cloak and bonnet.*)

MR. D. If we'd only given the three thousand dollars to Reuben, 'twould have jest set him up, and been some compensation for his sufferin's and losses goin' to the war.

MRS. D. Wal, I had no objection. I always thought he ought to have the money eventooally. As Miss Beswick said, no doubt it would be ten times the comfort to him now it would be a number o' years from now. But you didn't seem willin'.

MR. D. I don't know. 'Twas you that wasn't willin'.

MRS. D. Why, now, father!

MR. D. Wal, wal! No use talkin'. I hain't the least idee we shall ever see the color of them bonds agin. I never see Taddy stick any thing out so. If we took "The Sunday Visitor," or had a copy in the house, I should think he might be the rogue, spite of his denial.

MRS. D. I hain't the least idee't he touched 'em. He don't know the vally of cowpon bonds: what should he want of 'em? They was stole out of the wrapper to the bank: take my word for't.

MR. D. Your word for't! what's that good for? If they was stole to the bank, we can't prove any thing.

MRS. D. That's jest the trouble. It does seem strange to me that you shouldn't have had no more gumption than to trust bonds to strangers, when they told you in so many words they wouldn't be responsible.

MR. D. Wal, wal! If you've flung that in my teeth once, you have fifty times.

MRS. D. I don't see how we're goin' to work to find 'em now without makin' inquiries; and we can't make inquiries without lettin' it be known't we've bought.

MR. D. That's the wust on't!—after all our pains to keep it secret. Oh, dear! I wish the pesky cowpon bonds had never been invented.

MRS. D. The only way'll be to tell Reuben's folks on't fust; let them know the investment was made in his interest, spite of appearances. Here's Reuben now! (*Enter REUBEN and SOPHRONIA, L.*)

MR. D. How are you gittin' along, Reuben ?

REUBEN. I'm doing well enough.

MR. D. Glad to hear it, glad to hear it.

REUB. (*sitting down wearily on the sofa*). It isn't pleasant to think it may be months before I'm able to be about my business. But I could stand that. I could stand any thing but to see her working her life out for me and the children—to no purpose, either: that's the worst of it. The place 'll have to go.

SOPH. Oh, Reuben! why won't you stop worrying about that? Do try to have more faith!

REUB. If I had three thousand dollars,—yes, or even two,—I'd have faith. Ferring and Miss Beswick propose to send a subscription-paper around for my benefit. It wouldn't succeed, I know. We should only have the shame, without any benefit from it. You needn't groan so, Pa Ducklow,—you needn't look so solemn, Ma Ducklow,—for I'm not hinting at you. I don't expect you to help me out of my trouble. If you'd felt called upon to do it, you'd have done it before now; and I don't ask, I don't beg of any man.

MR. D. That's right; I like yer sperit, Reuben. I was groanin' to think of somethin',—somethin' you don't know nothin' about, Reuben.

MRS. D. Yes, Reuben, we should have helped you, and did—did take steps toward it. (*Sighs.*)

MR. D. In fact, you've met with a great misfortin', Reuben.

MRS. D. A great misfortin'.

MR. D. Unbeknown to yourself—a very great misfortin'. Yer Ma Ducklow knows.

MRS. D. Yes, Reuben; the very day you come home, yer Pa Ducklow made an investment for your benefit. We didn't mention it,—you know I wouldn't own up to it.

MR. D. Because, Reuben, we wanted to surprise you.

MRS. D. Yes, Reuben, we was a-keepin' it a secret till the right time; then we was a-goin' to make it a pleasant surprise to you.

REUB. What in the name of common-sense are you talking about?

MR. D. Cowpon bonds!

MRS. D. Cowpon bonds, Reuben! Three thousan'-dollar cowpon bonds!

MR. D. The money had been lent ; but I wanted to make a good investment for ye, and I thought there was nothin' so good as Gov'ments.

13 REUB. That's all right ; but, if you had money to invest for my benefit, I should have preferred to pay off the mortgage.

MR. D. Sartin', sartin' ! And you could have turned the bonds right in, if you had so chosen, like so much cash ; or you could have drawed your interest in gold, and paid the interest on your mortgage in currency, and made so much, — as I ruther thought you would.

MRS. D. You see, we was lookin' out for you, Reuben.

14 REUB. But the bonds ? where are the bonds ? (*Enter MISS BESWICK, with shawl over her head, R.*)

MRS. D. (*Aside.*) Her agin ! How d'ye do, Miss Beswick ? We was jest tellin' about our loss, — Reuben's loss.

MISS B. Very well. Don't let me interrupt. (*Slips shawl from her head, and sits down.*)

MR. D. We had bought some bonds for Reuben's benefit, — cowpon bonds, — and they've been stole !

MRS. D. Stole out of a wrapper, when we had 'em hid in the house, or else to the bank ; we can't tell which. It's a terrible misfortin'. We feel it dreadfully — on Reuben's account.

15 REUB. I see, Pa Ducklow ! You had kinder intentions towards me than I gave you credit for, — both of you. Forgive me if I wronged you. Don't feel so bad about it.

MRS. D. On your account, on your account, Reuben !

16 REUB. You did what you thought best. All I can say is, the fates are against me.

MISS B. (*Stretches up her neck, and clears her throat.*) Hem ! So them bonds you had bought for Reuben was in your house when I called !

MRS. D. Yes, Miss Beswick ; and that's what made it so uncomf'table for us to have you talk the way you did.

MISS B. Hem ! You'd actooally bought the bonds, — bought 'em for Reuben, had ye ?

MRS. D. To be sure !

MR. D. Sartin', sartin' !

MRS. D. We designed 'em for his benefit, when the right time come.

MR. D. His benefit — sartin'.

MISS B. Hem ! When the right time come ! Yes !

That right time wa'n't somethin' indefinite in the fur futur', of course! Yer losin' the bonds didn't hurry up yer benevolence the least grain, I s'pose. Very well! Sophrony, open the door, and ask Mr. Ferring to step in with them boys.

(SOPHRONIA opens the door, R., and DICK and TADDY enter with sheepish reluctance, followed by MR. FERRING, spreading his hands to prevent their escape.)

MRS. D. Thaddeus! what you here for?

MISS B. Because I said so! — Step along, boys: step along. Much obleeged to ye, Mr. Ferring. Don't know what I should have done if I hadn't met you. Hold up yer head, Taddy; for you ain't goin' to be hurt while I'm around. Take yer fists out of yer eyes, and stop blubberin'. Mr. Ducklow, that boy knows somethin' about Reuben's cowpon bonds!

MR. D. Thaddeus! did you —

MRS. D. Touch them bonds?

TAD. (*whimpering*). Didn't know what they was.

MRS. D. (*seizes him*). Did you take them?

MISS B. Hands off, if you please. I told him if he'd be a good boy, and tell the truth, he shouldn't be hurt. *If you please!* (MRS. D. *takes her hand off*.)

MR. D. Where be they now, — them bonds?

TAD. Don't know.

MR. D. Don't know, you villain! (*Rushing on Taddy.*)

MISS B. If *you* please! (MR. D. *recoils.*)

MRS. D. What did you want of 'em?

TAD. To cover my kite.

MRS. D. Your kite!

MR. D. Cover your kite! Didn't you know no better?

TAD. Didn't think you'd care. I had a newspaper, Dick give me to cover it; but I thought them things would be pootier. So I took 'em, and put the newspaper in the wrapper.

MR. D. Did you cover your kite with 'em?

TAD. No: when I found you cared so much for 'em, I was afraid to.

MR. D. Then what did you do with 'em?

TAD. Sold 'em to Dick.

MR. AND MRS. D. Sold 'em to Dick!

DICK. Yes, for six marbles.

MR. D. Six marbles! oh!

DICK. One was a bull's-eye, and one was an agate, and two alleys.

TAD. Then, when you threatened to lick me, I wanted him to trade back; and he wouldn't.

DICK. Course I wouldn't. He wasn't goin' to give me back but four; and I wouldn't agree to no such nonsense.

TAD. I lost the bull's-eye and one common.

MR. D. But the bonds! did you destroy 'em?

DICK. Likely I'd do that, when I'd paid six marbles for 'em! I wanted 'em to cover *my* kite with.

MR. D. Cover your — oh! then you've made a kite of 'em?

DICK. I was goin' to, when Aunt Beswick ketched me at it. Made me tell where I got 'em. Took me over to your house. Taddy said you was over here.

MR. D. Where *are* the bonds, for heaven's sake?

DICK. If Taddy'll give me back my marbles —

MISS B. That'll do! Reuben'll give you twenty marbles; for I believe you said they was Reuben's bonds, Mr. Ducklow.

MR. D. Yes — that is —

MRS. D. Eventooally.

MISS B. Now, look here! What am I to understand? Be they Reuben's bonds, or be they not? That's the question!

MR. D. Of course they're Reuben's.

MRS. D. We intended all the while — his benefit.

MISS B. Wal, now it's understood. (*Draws bonds from her bosom.*) Here, Reuben, are your cowpon bonds!

FERRING. I declare, Ducklow, you've done a handsome thing, if you never did before.

MR. D. Oh, I've had my plans! I've had my plans with regard to Reuben.

MRS. D. He was always a good boy.

SOPH. (*examining the bonds with REUBEN*). O Pa Ducklow! Ma Ducklow! I thank you for his sake! And you, Miss Beswick!

REUB. It's so! three thousand dollars! Miss Beswick, you're an angel from the skies! Order a bushel of marbles for the boys, and send the bill to me.

MRS. D. We always told you we'd do well by you, Reuben.

18 REUB. Do well! This is magnificent! Sophrony, you've got a home! The children have got a home! And I've got a new flag to fight under! (*Waves bond with left hand.*) Long may it wave! I'll win the battle yet!

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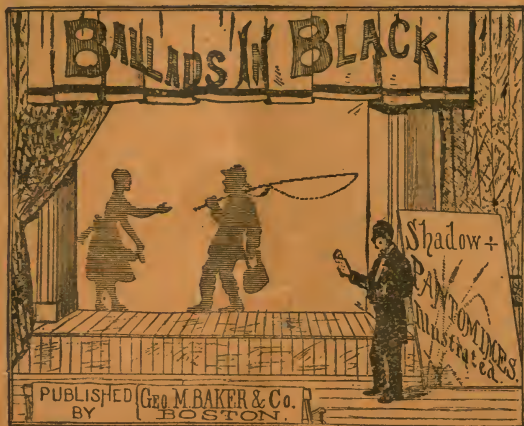
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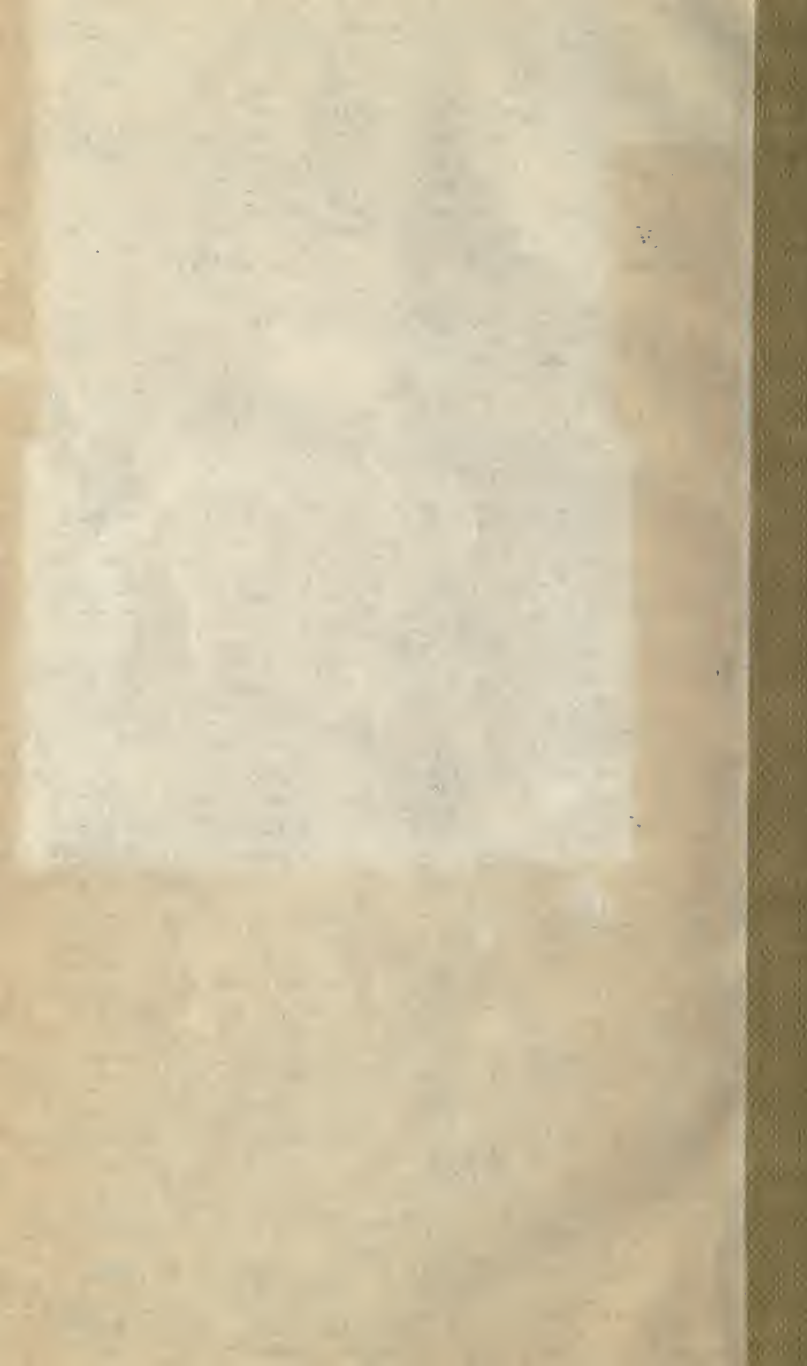
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